

Swallowing Swords

My mother swallowed swords while she was pregnant
and I came out knowing how to survive.
When they put me in her arms she leaned close and placed a razor blade beneath my tongue.
She skipped the honey coating.
My mother raised me amid the lions
And taught me how to dance so that they thought I was grass
Her lips at my ear and a whisper like twilight
"They'll learn you're an oak soon enough."
My mother pressed sunflowers up against my spine
She taught me how to grow in any dirt and never be afraid to shine-
And burn-
At the same time.
I told her I had things to say
When the men tried to tell me how to walk
When the world
Tried to tell me how to live.
"So speak up, little lion," she ordered.
Little legs trembling and voice like willows
"But momma, what if the sharp comes out?
What if they run
From my words?"
Her hands on my shoulders and eyes like gold
"I didn't raise you swallowing swords
to be afraid to open your mouth."